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WARD'S MEXICO

TRANSCRIPT

FROM

MEXICO IN 1827

BY

H. G. WARD, ESQ.

HIS MAJESTY'S CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN THAT COUNTRY DURING THE
YEARS 1825, 1826, AND 1827

PUBLISHED AT

LONDON, ENGLAND, IN 1828

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

PRESS OF JUDD & DETWEILER (INC.)

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SAN JUAN BAUTISTA MINING COMPANY

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Washington, D. C.
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LOOK US UP IN BRADSTREET'S.

Gift
Mrs. Jonathan G. Bigelow
July 22 1922

INTRODUCTORY.

In the Congressional Library at Washington are two substantial, leather-bound volumes of thirteen hundred pages, published in London, England, under the reign of King George IV, entitled "Mexico in 1827. By H. G. Ward, Esq., His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires in that country."

The author gives an exhaustive description of the country, its climate, different peoples, resources, and production, together with a complete history of the long revolutions which ended in Mexican independence and confiscation of the old Spanish claims which had been the source of vast revenues.

He made careful examinations of the mines that had given Mexico her reputation as the richest mining country in the world, and especially those of San Juan Bautista, in Sonora, which were renowned throughout Europe for the "immense wealth" they had produced, making this busy mining camp the capital of North New Spain long before Arispe was built. He says: "*In fact, it was the main object of my journey from England in 1825 to visit this mineral.*"

He describes fully the work done and the wealth remaining in that famous group of fourteen mines, which could not at that time be worked below the water level; also those scarcely less celebrated mines known as Descubridora, Bronzosa, and Pinal, all of which have become the property of a number of prominent business men, mostly of Washington, D. C., who intend to reopen and work these extremely valuable properties with the aid of modern pumping and mining machinery.

The San Juan Bautista Mining Company has been fully organized for such purpose, the property entirely paid for by said company, and this transcript is issued for the benefit of those who might like to join us in raising the necessary working capital.

For further information in regard to these properties, address

SAN JUAN BAUTISTA MINING CO.,
513-514 Ouray Building, Washington, D. C.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

“ I have endeavored to trace operations upon each branch of the great interests of the State, but more particularly upon the mines, the importance of which both to New Spain and to Europe it has been one of my principal objects to develop.

“As my views differ materially from those generally entertained, I think it right to state, distinctly and unreservedly, that the situation which I had the honor of filling in Mexico rendered it impossible for me to take any other interest in the issue of the enterprises by which I was surrounded than that which I could not but feel in operations in which British capital to so large an amount is invested.

“ I never have possessed *a single mining share* ; yet, from circumstances stated in the body of my work, I have perhaps seen more of the mines of New Spain, and am in possession of more data with regard to their former produce, than the majority of those whose fortunes depend upon the result of the present attempt to work them by foreign capital.

“ Convinced that publicity ought to be desired by all mining companies as the only security against those suspicions by which their credit has so frequently been shaken, I have laid before the world, without reserve, the whole of the information now in my possession respecting them.”

TRANSCRIPT.

Eighteen leagues to the east of Babiadora is the town of Oposura, the capital of the Opata nation and the residence of many of the principal inhabitants of this part of the State. It is a large town, containing upward of 4,000 inhabitants, and situated upon the southern extremity of a fine plain, on the banks of a river of the same name, which falls into the River Yaqui above Onabas.

Oposura, though little known in Mexico, is one of the oldest established in the province and is the residence of many of the descendants of those who first settled in this State; amongst which are the names of Morenos, Mazo, Peralta, Bustamante, Vasquez, Malen, and Teran. As early as the beginning of the last century (1700), the Jesuits had erected a famous convent and church here; the former is now in a ruinous state, but the church is entirely built of red brick and stone, decorated with many pictures and an image of the Virgin which possesses diamonds, pearls, gold, silver, and precious stones to a very considerable value. The square is very spacious and surrounded by the houses of the principal families; besides which there are several good and regular streets, which render Oposura by far the prettiest and gayest town in the State.

The whites are in greater proportion to the Indians than in any other place, and the Indians themselves seem in a more thriving condition, having better land and more live stock. Below the town for a considerable distance the lands are divided among the inhabitants, and water from the river is carried through each lot by canals, so that here they can produce vegetables all the year round. Each family grows corn, wheat, frijoles, sugar, etc., for the annual provision; most of them have horses, mules, and horned cattle, which breed and feed in the adjacent plains and mountains.

At certain seasons they collect the cattle, when each proprietor affixes his mark. It is by the number of cattle which a man pos-

sesses that you estimate his wealth. Very few have money, except the merchants. When they kill a bull eight or ten families divide it, and so each kills in turn. When a merchant arrives with goods to offer, the people select what they want and pay in mules, bullocks, horses, etc. In this way they manage almost all their affairs without the necessity of money. I resided in Oposura nearly three months, in the house of the Cura, it being a central point, from which I made various excursions, so that I had a good opportunity of gaining a thorough knowledge of the manners and customs of the natives. To enter into minutia would require much time ; I shall therefore confine myself to an outline. The men are a fine race, much superior to any in the southern provinces of New Spain. They are very lively, and industrious, and strangers to care. The women are generally well grown, handsome, with good shapes and complexions. A great many have blue eyes and light hair, which is a proof that they are not of Moorish extraction. They pride themselves on not mixing their blood with the aborigines. The women are continually employed in domestic affairs, and are excellent wives and mothers. They make all the men's clothing, as well as their own, which are of silk and stuff, and they are very celebrated for needlework of every description, ornamental as well as plain. Their embroidery is not excelled by anything in Europe, if it is surpassed in China. Both sexes are passionately fond of dancing and cards, and the intercourse of society is constantly carried on in order to gratify these tastes.

About eight leagues to the northwest of Oposura are the old and celebrated mines of San Juan Bautista of Sonora, which was the seat of government for this province long before Arispe was built. IN FACT, IT WAS THE MAIN OBJECT OF MY JOURNEY FROM ENGLAND IN 1825 to visit this mineral. Ten days after our arrival in Oposura the priest, Dr. Julian Moreno, informed us that he had ordered everything to be prepared for OUR JOURNEY TO THESE LONG-FORSAKEN MOUNTAINS ; that on the following day his servants, whom he had dispatched to the hacienda for the purpose, would bring horses and mules for the whole party, and that he himself, with a number of

the principal inhabitants and the Alcalde at their head, would accompany us. Two of the cura's sisters and four other ladies announced their determination to be of the party, and prepared provisions of every description for a week, besides plenty of wine and brandy.

On the 8th of March we set out, our party consisting of forty-five persons, including servants, cooks, etc. We arrived at San Juan, preceded by a musician, mounted on a mule, playing a guitar ; for nothing can be done in Sonora without music. On the present occasion the ladies were interested in the question, as they wished to dance in the evenings. On our arrival we found nothing remaining of a place once so famous but the outer walls of the church, one room of which was entire, while we soon made another tenable with bulls' hides and blankets, which we appropriated to the ladies. The greater part of the men slept in the open air. Here we remained four days, and completely investigated the whole of the surrounding mountains, returning every evening to the camp, where the women prepared everything for our comfort.

The "MINERAL" of San Juan is a mountain of itself, encircled by others to the north, west, and south of considerably greater elevation. It is three thousand yards in length from east to west and fifteen hundred yards in breadth where broadest, terminating at both ends in a point, and is entirely surrounded by a ravine which discharges itself at the east end into a large open plain. This mountain or hill has an elevation of six or seven hundred feet where highest, at which part the principal vein, called Santa Ana, crosses from north to south. This is crossed by another vein on the northern slope of the mountain, which is called El Rosario. These two mines have been worked to a considerable extent and have produced, according to existing documents and traditions, in which no one varies, IMMENSE WEALTH. They now contain a great deal of water (at least fifty or sixty varas), which would require new shafts and whims to take it out. In this same hill there are twelve other distinct veins, some of which have been worked for the sake of those small threads of very rich silver which appear to have formed in the center of the vein, but the azogues

(mill ore), which are very abundant and yield from twenty-four to ninety-six (\$67.60) ounces of silver for three hundred pounds of ore (according to experiments made on the spot by an azoguero whom we brought with us from Real del Monte), are untouched. The ores by smelting HAVE YIELDED ONE-HALF PURE SILVER; and tradition says, WHEN THEY WERE OBLIGED TO ABANDON SANTA ANA FROM WATER COMING IN, THEY LEFT OFF IN A VEIN OF PURE SILVER one-third of a yard in breadth. The ABOVE TWELVE VEINS VARY FROM ONE YARD TO SIX IN BREADTH at the surface; the depths to which they have worked are as follows:

SANTA ANA, 140 varas; ROSARIO, 60; CATA DE LA AGUA, 5; GUADALUPE, 4; GAZAPA, 20; TEXEDORA, 20; SANTA CATARINA, 20; ARPA, 12; PRIETA, 12; BELLOTITA, 12; CORONILLA, 12; FONTANA, 10. Not one of them has a shaft except Santa Ana, which is 84 yards deep to the water. Below the water there is no shaft.

Half a league to the north of SANTA ANA is the mine of DESCUBRIDORA, with a vein of azogues (mill ore) fifteen varas in breadth. This mine is thirty varas deep and the metals contain ninety-six ounces to three hundred pounds.

One league to the westward is the mine called BRONZOSA, with an IMMENSE VEIN which may be traced at least ONE MILE upon the surface. It has been considerably worked, but has water in it.

To the north is the mining district of Nacosari, sixteen leagues from Oposura.

* * * * *

The mines of Churunibabi, Pinal, Huacal, Aguage, and many others are situated to the north and northeast of Nacosari, at no great distance from San Juan Del Rio, built upon a stream which falls into the Yaqui. These "minerals" are equally rich with those already described.

C. B. Dahlgren, son of Admiral Dahlgren of the United States Navy, in his work entitled "Historic Mines of Mexico," confirms Ward's statement regarding San Juan Bautista mines. He says the ore from Descubridora is said to run as high as \$768 per ton, and speaks of the silver mine Tobbacoatche, six miles west of San Juan, also belonging to this company.

PINAL.

PINAL CONTAINS A GREATER PROPORTION OF GOLD THAN SILVER.

It is recorded in the archives of Arispe that the former owner, a lady, by name Maria Quijada, lent at one time seven hundred marcos (5,600 ounces) of gold for the use of the government.

* * * * *

In all districts above described the roads are only passable for horses and mules, the country being very mountainous, but not of very great elevation. None of these mines are more than six or seven leagues from rapid streams of water sufficiently considerable to work almost any machinery.

* * * * *

I have here mentioned the most considerable mining districts; but in Sonora almost every mountain and hill contains silver and gold. Even in the plains beds of native gold have been found, in grains varying in size from one to sixty ounces, as in Cieneguilla, San Francisco, San Antonio de la Buerta, Mulatoes, Baucachi, and various others. Silver has been found in immense balls in Arizona.

I have seen much of Indians and am acquainted with some of the tribes that inhabit the western country that stretches from Florida, by Texas and Cohahuila, to the Pacific. I have invariably found them kind and harmless when well treated. The Apaches of the North are an extremely independent and high-minded people. They have very light complexions, and will not live in towns or in a domesticated state, but subsist entirely by hunting. They are very brave, good horsemen, handle the lance remarkably well, and are good marksmen with the bow and arrow. The governor of the State, Don Simon Elias, told me that if an Apache leaves his hut for one minute, on his return he examines his bow, turns every arrow, and looks at the point and feather, so that he is always prepared for enemies or game. The continued wars carried on against them by the Spaniards for many years and conducted by cruel and rapacious officers gave them the greatest abhorrence of their conquerors, but they entertained no antipathy toward the Creoles born in the State, and frequently when the Spaniards were obliged to

sue for suspension of hostilities they sent two brothers, called Geronimo and Leonardo Escalante, to treat. These men exercised so great an influence over the Indians by their mode of treating them, that they always succeeded. In the part of Sonora last described the climate is charming, the thermometer ranges betwixt 50 and 84 ; the atmosphere is always dry and clear. The inhabitants require no fires in the houses in winter, nor are they oppressed with the summer heat. In the mountains the evenings and mornings are sometimes chilly. The natives live generally to a good old age ; the women are prolific, and bear from eight to twenty children, and in some instances have exceeded that number.

* * * * * * *

I left the north of Sonora on the 8th of May, 1826, with sincere regret, after having spent three months there, which I shall ever consider as the most agreeable part of my life. The route to the capital, El Fuerte, is nearly due south from Oposura; it lies through a country of little interest, the road winding continually through deep glens between ridges of mountains of a secondary class.

* * * * * * *

Of these districts a very detailed account is given in Colonel Bourne's Journal. The most noted are Cerro Gordo (southeast of Babiadora), and the mines of Cobriza, San Antonio, Dolores (within a little distance of the same place); the mines of SAN JUAN BAUTISTA DE SONORA (situated upon a mountain eight leagues to the northwest of Oposura, which is crossed in different directions by fourteen veins all distinctly pronounced,) and those of San Pedro Nacosari and Churinibabi (to the north and northwest of Oposura).

In all these districts the depths of the mines are inconsiderable, their former riches acknowledged, and the causes by which their working was interrupted known. The advances necessary in order to bring them into activity are small, for in fact it is more remittances of quicksilver and mining stores (which must be sent round Cape Horn to Guaymas), than money, that is requisite. No unreasonable expectations are entertained by the Mexican proprietors, and no onerous conditions proposed ; while their respectability and influences in the country are the best possible guarantee to the ad-

venturers that their operations will be conducted with good faith and can meet with no interruption.

The success of the enterprise appears to be unquestionable, and regarding as I do the prosperity of the mines of Mexico as intimately connected with that of our own trade, I should think it a subject of just regret, if, after embarking so eagerly in speculations, of which nothing certain was known, capitalists should not be found to engage in one the result of which can hardly be regarded as doubtful.

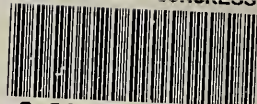
I am aware that many of the statements contained in this and the preceding books respecting the mineral riches of the north of New Spain will be thought exaggerated. *They are not so; they will be confirmed by every future report*, and in a few years the public, familiarized with facts which are only questioned because they are new, will wonder at its present incredulity and regret the loss of advantages which may not always be within reach.

I am willing to hope, however, that my present undertaking may have the effect of directing the attention of some of my countrymen to a field, the importance of which has been hitherto but little suspected. Many of the facts detailed in the preceding pages are known in Mexico only by persons immediately connected with the part of the country to which they relate, but by them they are unanimously confirmed.

It may be asked, How the territory possessing such vast natural resources can have been reduced to the state of comparative poverty in which it now lies? The cause is simple. The precious metals do not in themselves constitute wealth, and as long as any communication between Sonora and the rest of the world was prohibited, except through the medium of the capital, "Mexico City," and the port of Vera Cruz, they could not even be employed as a means of obtaining the produce of European industry which they now command. The inhabitants, forbidden to avail themselves of the harbors upon their shores, without quicksilver, (so essential in mining processes), and without a mint (the nearest was that of the capital, 600 leagues from Arispe), thought little of the mineral treasures by which they

were surrounded, and devoted their whole attention to the cultivation of those upon which their subsistence and comforts depended.

Their haciendas, their flocks and herds, horses and mules, constituted their only care ; and no portion of Mexico is richer than Sonora in these ; but even at the present day, in many of the larger towns, money is unknown, and sales are effected by barter, the produce of the interior (as silver bars, gold dust, hides, and flour) being exchanged for the imports of Guaymas, Mazatlan, at Petic or Rosario, Alamos, and Cosala. There is no mint as yet nearer than Durango or Guadalajara, and until an establishment of this nature be formed the circulating medium will, of course, continue very small ; but the exports of the precious metals in bars and grains to Calcutta and Canton are very considerable, the intercourse with India and China being already better organized than that with any of the southern provinces of the Republic.



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